

## The Forgotten Islands Of The Louisiade Archipelago

The Louisiades Archipelago is a remote island chain made up of hundreds of islands stretching over 400km east of the Papua New Guinea mainland. Its geographical isolation has helped to preserve its rich Melanesian culture and the area is host to an incredibly distinct and thriving Canoe culture. Within the Archipelago each island group has its own unique languages, canoe designs and traditions - one thing everyone has in common is a love of paddling. Each year in November the [National Kenu and Kundu Festival](#) occurs in Alotau highlighting the diversity and richness of canoe culture in the region.

Local people of the Louisiades rely on the ocean for food and transport; they are practically born with a paddle in hand. They have a deep understanding of the winds, tides and currents in ways that most of us can not imagine.

## The Samarai Islands

Basilaki and Sideia Islands lie just to the East of the Papua New Guinea mainland, part of the Samarai Island Group in the Louisiade Archipelago. The islands are fringed by significant coral reefs which are teeming with sea life from small colourful reef fish to large pelagic species and marine mammals like Manta Rays. Aside from fishing from handmade wooden dugout canoes, many people here live by subsistence farming (Sago, Taro, Yams and Greens). Houses are made of local timbers and often feature intricate walls made

with woven palm leaves and expansive meticulously groomed gardens.

In the center of Basilaki Island mount Kova Sina rises 531m out of the ocean. Kova Sina along with many smaller peaks create relatively calm waters on the northern-side, sheltered from the incessant South Easterly wind and swell that is common to the Louisiades.



### A Social Expedition

The local people of Basilaki and Sideia Islands are incredibly welcoming and generous. A warm, genuine hospitality is shown to the rare visitors that venture here. These trips are quite social and this real connection with local people, immersed in their day-to-day life, is the highlight. People that have gotten the most out of this journey are those that are keen to get to know those around them, and make friends along the way.

Often we will camp on the beach near a homestead or village, and the land-owners will often join us to tell stories by the campfire. There is a culture of reciprocity in these islands and people will generously bring gifts of coconuts, fruit, vegetable or fish. If you

are seeking a remote, wilderness trip where you will not see another soul for days on end, this is not the trip for you.

Our visits to these islands are a continually developing conversation with local people, where we seek to know if our visits are positive, desirable, and what the community needs from us moving ahead. Throughout 2024 the communities we visit have been overwhelmingly supportive. Some things that have been identified as goals that our visitation can help with are improving access to education, healthcare and water given the remote locale.

## **Trip Itinerary**

This trip takes place on the open ocean, and the Coral Sea is renowned for changeable weather including the winds and swells. We ask all team members to be dynamic as individuals and offer their strengths to the paddle group regarding the flexibility mother nature often demands in the itinerary. Rest assured that your leaders are out there to guide you along the best and safest experience possible.

**The Itinerary below is only a rough plan and is subject to change due to group dynamics, weather, unforeseen delays and other situations that may cause alterations in travel plans. Paddle distances vary each day but you can expect paddle distances to range between 8 - 20km per day. A high-level of personal responsibility and stewardship is expected to ensure the safety and contentment of yourself, the team, our hosts and the land-owners.**

**12 day Journey (group meets in Alotau and finishes in Alotau)**

### **Day 1.**

AM flight to Alotau and airport pickup.

First team briefing in the early afternoon at Napatana Lodge. Then go to buy provisions in the local market, pack food, equipment and prepare kayaking gear.

6PM - We will have a Welcome Dinner Banquet at Napatana Lodge. Pack personal items into your personal drybag (approx. 30L capacity, please pack light).

Twin share accommodation is provided at Napatana Lodge.

## **Day 2.**

Early AM departure for small boat charter to the eastern end of the island chain (approx. 4 hours). Unload gear, setup camp, rig kayaks and spend the afternoon getting acquainted with your craft, exploring the island and testing your snorkelling gear.

## **Days 3 – 9**

Paddle west along Basilaki and Sideia island chain, camping on idyllic beaches, snorkeling vibrant coral reefs and visiting homesteads and villages. This may include cultural activities / displays organised in collaboration with local communities which could be cultural dances, cultural practices, fishing and Sailau / Kanu demonstrations.

## **Day 10**

We usually make our way to Nuli Sapi Retreat by motor boat, however it is possible to paddle there under perfect wind, swell and tide conditions. On the way, we have the opportunity to visit Kwato Church (a historic site, the first built in PNG) and snorkel with Manta Rays near Gona Bara Bara Island (tide conditions permitting). Once at Nuli Sapi you can unwind in traditionally styled waterfront lodgings.

## **Day 11.**

Small charter boat ride back to Alotau.

Twin share accommodation is provided at Napatana Lodge. Farewell dinner is included.

## **Day 12.**

AM drop at Airport.

Flights back to Port Moresby and home.

\*Day 12 is a travel day and is not considered part of your journey with Coral Sea Kayaking.

## **Expedition Dynamics in the Louisiades**

As idyllic as the Louisiades might sound, this destination is remote and arguably one of the world's last great sea kayaking frontiers. It is a true expedition and only for the adventurous soul. As a member of the expedition team you will be required to chip in and help out on all facets to make this expedition a success, and you will only 'get out what you put in' as they say. This will include, but is not limited to moving and setting up equipment, packing and preparing food, setting up camps and managing a clean water supply. You will need to be flexible and adaptable, as required by any travel in PNG. It is your responsibility to get to the start location and to help solve any problems associated with getting your journey back on track if you encounter delays.

## **Difficulty & Fitness Level**

This expedition is geared towards fit, outgoing, adventurous people. Much of the Basilaki-Sideia route is coastal kayaking and most days will involve 2-4hours of paddling (longest single-leg/day is approx. 17km). That said, there is the possibility of strong currents on

several of the passages between islands. Also, being an oceanic route, it is always possible that strong weather can bring wind and swell. We require participants to be water confident, strong swimmers, have some kayaking experience and have some experience traveling independently outside of Western Culture.

You may be required to be physically active all day in an exposed tropical environment and to work together in a team dynamic. Like many remote travel destinations, travel in Papua New Guinea can sometimes be rough, so it requires an open mindset and robust personality. This is not a ‘tour’ moving between well established checkpoints and it does not have a fixed itinerary. We will need to collectively adapt to the places that we visit.

## **Weather in the Islands**

In October and November we can expect humid days with temperatures between 25-30 degrees Celsius and some days of rain. When traveling on the lee-side of the islands, we are often sheltered from prevailing winds which allows great snorkeling (even just by looking out from your boat!), swimming and great views across a vast ocean landscape.

## **Snorkelling & Fishing**

There are some incredible opportunities for snorkeling along the route, and quite often we will anchor onshore and slide straight out of our kayaks into the water. It is advantageous if participants can get in and out of their kayak in deep water, but guides are able to assist if the circumstances make this more difficult.

It is possible to fish along the route, either spear fishing Hawaiian sling style, trawling lures or line / rod fishing. If engaging in fishing, you should have prior experience to manage this (the middle of the Coral Sea is not the place to begin). If trawling from a kayak or

spear fishing you will need to carry your own dive knife and have it accessible on your person to manage the risk of entanglement.

## Safety

Although Papua New Guinea is notorious as a place troubled with crime, corruption and hostilities; the Louisiades is a different matter altogether. The people are genuinely friendly, welcoming and very trustworthy. Going out of their way to help 'Dim Dims' (the local name for white people). After many trips to this region we have never encountered any hostility from the locals or felt actively worried about our safety, we have only encountered kindness and enriching cultural traditions.

This is not the case in Port Moresby. Although it has improved recently, Port Moresby is still considered a potentially dangerous place for travelers and we strongly recommend you avoid walking the streets, especially at night. Our itinerary sometimes demands that travelers spend one night in Port Moresby due to the flight schedules. Our personal recommendation for an affordable and friendly stay is Raintree Lodge in Port Moresby. It is close to the airport and located within a compound. We strongly recommend that you arrange to use the hotel transport shuttle when moving between the Hotel and Airport.

## Flights

Coral Sea Kayaking does not arrange transport to and from the expedition. This is because this expedition is geared towards independent, self-reliant travelers. Travel in PNG requires patience, with fuel rationing through 2024 causing havoc for flight schedules, resulting in delays or cancellations.

Sometimes participants will be asked to fly with some expedition

equipment and dry food provisions. This will be arranged by Coral Sea Kayaking prior to the trip and will depend on participants' flight schedule and baggage allowance.

In the case of missed flights, the Basilaki-Sideia route is close enough to Alotau that it is possible to arrange motor boat transport for delayed travelers to catch up to the expedition if need be. Any costs would be incurred by individuals, hopefully to be sorted out within their own travel insurance policy post-trip. If several (or all) members of the team have not arrived on time, trip departure can be delayed at trip leader discretion.

## **Travel Insurance**

Coral Sea Kayaking insists that all participants on the expedition have travel insurance that covers at a minimum: comprehensive medical and trip cancellation and advises insurance which covers flight delays and cancellations if possible.

Some of the key activities that we will undertake on this journey which must be covered include:

- Sea Kayaking
- Snorkelling
- Sailing
- Motor Boating
- Hiking (under 500m elevation)
- Camping

## **The Sea Kayaking Expedition**

Guides will usually set up a Chatgroup (often on WhatsApp) in the weeks prior to the expedition. This will help us to accommodate last minute changes that are a part of travelling in PNG.

## Pre-departure meeting

Your guides will run briefings on day one in Alotau (usually starting around 2pm, once the afternoon flight has arrived). These briefings will be conducted at a time and location TBD and will outline cultural considerations, the paddle plan, gear packing and any other relevant information as well as answer questions and concerns that you may have on arrival. At this briefing, you will be provisioned with drybags and key information to help you pack.

## Craft of Choice

We utilise a fleet of Australian made Australis Komodo Sea Kayaks for all our trips in the Louisiades Archipelago. Tried and tested, these plastic double sea kayaks are 7.4m long and are very sea worthy. These are the perfect vessels out here because the modular design can break apart when we need to transport them in a ship's cargo hold or on motor boats.

## In country medical concerns

We ask that all customers are fit and healthy for this expedition with no injury or illness that could restrict their involvement in the everyday activity of a sea kayak expedition. The Louisiades is a lengthy medivac to definitive medical care. In serious cases an aircraft may be dispatched from Australia or Port Moresby. Guides carry appropriate expedition medical kits and satellite communications to manage a prolonged extraction.

Malaria is present in Alotau and on Basilaki and Sideia islands. We strongly recommend participants take appropriate prophylactic medication precautions. When deciding which anti-malarial medication is right for you, consider talking to your doctor about the usage of doxycycline, which may also have dual benefits of fighting infection from coral cuts and other scrapes you may

encounter on the journey.

## Other Risks

Although there are mangroves around the islands, local people report that crocodiles are not a threat, and there are dozens of locals on the water in their small canoes on any given day. Unlike in Australia, crocodiles are hunted and eggs are harvested which keeps populations in check, and means that crocs do not approach humans. Local people report that Box Jellyfish are not found in the region. Similar to North Queensland, Blue Bottle Jellyfish and other stinging creatures (stinging fish, snakes, conefish etc.) are certainly found in these waters. We recommend covering up when snorkeling and swimming to mitigate the risk of stings and bites. We also attempt to check-in with local leaders regularly to get a clearer understanding of what is present at our time of visitation.

## Expedition Food

On this expedition we source many of our food and provisions from local markets in Alotau, followed by trading for fresh food in local villages along the route. Our aim is to minimise the impact of our visits on local culture, and allow you a more immersive experience - therefore we often follow a local diet. The traditional Melanesian diet is very healthy and centered around seafood, greens and root vegetables like taro, cassava, yams and plantain and of course plenty of coconuts! All meals during the paddling trip are supplied by Coral Sea Kayaking, along with a Welcome Dinner on day 1 and a farewell dinner on the last evening. All other Hotel lunches, dinners, beverages and other supplies possibly required during transit are at the cost of the traveler.

## Inclusions

- Kayaking and expedition equipment

- All meals whilst on expedition
- Welcome & Farewell dinners
- All on-trip transfers including boat charters
- Professional kayak guides
- Local guides and cultural displays
- Camping fees
- Many more essentials specific to the route

## Cost

2025 & 2026 Trip Cost: \$5400 AUD ( \$900 deposit when booking )  
(BYO Tent and Sleeping Pad - save \$200)

Due to high costs incurred running expeditions in PNG we require a minimum number of 8 people to join in order to go ahead. Arranging visas and flights in PNG can be a headache, so we strongly recommend waiting until 4 months before the trip before making any of these arrangements. This allows us to confirm all trip details before you go through this process of setting your travels in stone.

### Payment Schedule

1. Deposit at time of booking: \$900
2. At least 4 months prior to departure: \$2000
3. 2 months prior to departure: \$Balance (\$2500)

Please don't hesitate to contact us for more information or to discuss suitability for the trip. We hope you will join us on this extraordinary journey through the Louisiade Archipelago ☺

## Local Recommendations:

### Before or After your trip:

#### **Kwame Guesthouse**

Stay at Kwame Guesthouse for a few nights before or after your trip if you would like a secluded paradise in which to unwind. A family run guesthouse 1.5 hours from Alotau situated near East Cape with great snorkeling and swimming on the doorstep.

<https://www.kwameguesthousesandactivitiespng.com/>

## **Tawali Resort**

Tawali is a well established dive resort with stunning architecture and views.

<https://tawali.com/>

## Accommodation In Alotau

- Napatana Lodge
- Driftwood Resort
- Waterfront Hotel
- Masurina Lodge